

Session V – Large Lakes, Deltas, and Transboundary Partnerships: Fostering Science, Cooperation, and Sound Management
4:00 PM

The Governance Dimensions of Large Lakes Management: Institutions for the Management of Shared Natural Resources

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Abstract

Managing a shared natural resource—such as a large lake—is inherently conflict-laden because of diffuse political power and broad stakeholder interests. “Governance” is a process by which governments, institutions, norms, laws, regulations, and stakeholders interact in the exercising of power and responsibilities. Governance shapes how decisions are made about issues of concern to both the public and to government and is often a key element of effective management of natural resources that transcend political boundaries because it helps foster cooperation. A governance structure might be underpinned by an agreement among two or more parties and supported by a formal institution such as a commission, an authority, or a council, though governance structures can also be less formal. One rationale for a united approach to management is the need for uniform practices, enforcement, laws, and regulations. Other reasons include a need for “whole systems thinking,” the need to ensure the will to act among governments, the need to formally involve stakeholders in the management process, and the need to leverage funds while avoiding working at cross purposes. This presentation explores the governance dimensions of large lakes management by discussing the rationale for establishing governance regimes, by presenting some key elements of governance, and by reflecting on shortcomings and issues to avoid when considering governance of large lake ecosystems.